DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 305 885 HE 022 428

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TITLE Educational and Training Services for Export Now.
PUB DATE 9 Mar 89
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Export Services Now Conference sponsored by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the New Jersey Export Council (March 9, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Business; Competition; Educational Economics; Exports; *Higher Education; Human Capital; *Industry; *International Trade; Success
IDENTIFIERS Ramapo College of New Jersey

ABSTRACT

In the traditional view, U.S. colleges and universities are devoted to teaching and research, offering a superior diversity of programs, institutional types and missions, revenue sources, and styles of governance. In recent years, public and private sector observers have commented on higher education as part of the nation's infrastructure. Though this view is useful, it is also important to view higher education as a service to be exported. The elements for success already exist, but there is no overall strategy for keeping the competitive advantage. Higher education as an industry is discussed, noting U.S. colleges and universities enroll 12 million students, employ 700,000 faculty and staff, manage $115 billion in physical facilities and equipment, raise $6 billion annually in private support, and spend nearly $100 billion per year. It is a challenge for them to enhance the nation's economic performance without losing their academic balance. A systematic approach to opportunities for export is recommended. A strategy for considering higher education as a service to export is presented, and a case study of Ramapo College of New Jersey is provided. It is important to build on existing strengths to develop cooperative networks and realize the potential of higher education as a service to export. (SM)

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"Educational and Training Services for Export Now"

Dr. Robert A. Scott, President, Ramapo College of New Jersey

Introduction

To most observers, the U. S. system of higher education is the envy of the world. It offers greater diversity, with quality, of programs, institutional types and missions, revenue sources, and styles of governance than any other nation. U. S. institutions offer more opportunities for access to higher learning, have a greater commitment to accountability through accreditation, and more independence for institutional action than is common throughout the world. How do we know? One answer is provided by the 350,000 students from other countries who study at U. S. institutions each year. Another is provided by the arrangements made by foreign firms to send employees to U. S. colleges and universities.

In the traditional view, these colleges and universities are devoted to teaching and research. For this reason most institutions are viewed as "Ivory Towers," more apart from than a part of society.

In recent years, observers from both the public and private sectors have commented on higher education as part of the nation's infrastructure like transportation and communication links, and essential for economic competitiveness. In a recent report, the Board of Regents of the State University of New York commented as follows:

> The United States cannot deal successfully with international economic policy without knowledge of the cultural context within which various economies work. Nor can it address global environmental, population, or political problems without the ability to communicate freely with other peoples. We must understand the perspectives of other groups that are rooted in tradition, religion

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Invited presentation at "Export Services Now Conference" sponsored by the U. S. Department of Commerce and the New Jersey District Export Council, March 9, 1989, Chubb World Headquarters

HE 022 428

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> and internal relationships. Educational institutions and organizations are in the best position to educate and train our citizens to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to understand other peoples and be able to work comfortably with them.

That's a useful view, but it, too, is still limited. We should view higher education not only as a part of the infrastructure, but also as service to be exported. This is not just a matter of attitude and perspective, but also a matter of strategy, focus, and follow-through. The elements for success already exist, but there is no overall strategy. In fact, if we don't act soon, we could lose our competitive advantage and turn our opportunity for export into a necessity for import -- especially of faculty, scholars and students in the sciences and engineering.

Higher Education as an Industry

Colleges and universities in the United States number 3300, enroll 12 million students, employ 700,000 faculty and staff, manage $115 billion in physical facilities and equipment, offer thousands of degree programs, raise $6 billion annually in private support, and spend nearly $100 billion per year. This is a Fortune 100 enterprise if there ever was one. The 3300 institutions in this loosely knit system share a common currency of credits and are "licensed" to provide their services by six parallel regional accrediting associations.

Industry is a major client of higher education. In addition to the usual relations -- hiring graduates and sponsoring research -- college and university faculty supply a significant proportion of the $40 billion worth of corporate training offered each year.

Public policy discussions concerning trade and competitiveness recognize higher education as a necessity. The State University of New York quote suggests that! Higher education is viewed as a source of preparation, training and retraining for executives, entrepreneurs and government

officials. According to the Census Bureau, some 3% of the nation's workers, 120,000 people, need retraining annually. This is a tremendous challenge for colleges, universities, career schools, and corporate training programs.

A Caveat

This is not only a challenge, but a concern as well. Even as I believe that colleges and universities can do a great deal more to enhance our nation's economic performance, I believe our institutions must be careful not to lose their academic balance, both in terms of teaching and scholarship, and independence of action. Clark Kerr is correct to say that higher education is "subject to great tension from three conflicting imperatives: (1) to preserve its heritage; (2) to serve more effectively the cause of equality of opportunity -- the great theme of the 1960s; and (3) to serve competency in the labor market -- the great theme of the 1980s." Institutions of higher education should not promise more than they can deliver.

But they can deliver a great deal more than they do now. And what they already do could be much more effective if it were part of a strategy for competitiveness in trade. As it is, many institutions offer discrete programs and services, and no one seems concerned about the lack of a systematic approach. The 350,000 foreign students represent 3% of college enrollments. Why not 10% as a goal? This is not an argument for central control. I simply suggest that the results would be greater if we had a more systematic approach to opportunities for export.

A Strategy for Considering Higher Education as a Service to Export

A strategy for considering higher education as a service to export would include a set of goals, an assessment of current strengths and assets, an assessment of opportunities, priorities for targeted areas in the world, priorities for areas of knowledge, and a plan for coordinating the

various and numerous key elements. After all, we must consider U. S. and foreign students at all levels of study, U. S. and foreign faculty and visiting scholars, programs of education, training and retraining, consulting and research, the forms of credentials offered, locations here and there, and organized information and data about all of the above.

Colleges and universities already export their services and knowledge by sending faculty and students to other countries for periods of study and research. Popular fields are agriculture and food production, business, computing, and social sciences. And institutions of higher education enroll several hundred thousand foreign students who import tuition and export ideas and values. But there is much more which can be done.

Imagine if state and regional trade groups, companies interested in export, and colleges and universities knew more about each others' strengths and opportunities, and took a coordinated approach to attaining selected goals. Just think what could be accomplished if federally-supported research labs and United States Information Agency priorities were part of the discussion for developing a state's strategy for increasing exports?

A Case Example

It is likely that those who think of higher education as a service with potential for export will think of this as a role reserved for large research universities. By citing a few examples from Ramapo College, I will show it is not.

Ramapo College enrolls foreign students who pay tuition and return to their home countries as managers, professionals, and teachers. We send students to other countries, even as coop interns. We host foreign scholars who study and teach at Ramapo, and send faculty to other

countries in a similar capacity. When appropriate, our faculty and visitors meet with executives of area corporations to brief them on regional issues and opportunities.

Our faculty in China this year are planning for a teleconference designed to help Chinese and U. S. residents learn more about each other's culture. We are coordinating an effort to bring Chinese and Israeli business interests together for the first time. We have also served as consultants to advise the Shanghai Industrial Management Training Center and the English language programs of the State Bank Training Project in Indonesia. In all of these efforts, telecommunications will prove to be our competitive advantage for the future.

In cooperation with Princeton University's Princeton-In-Asia Program, we will host Asian managers and bureaucrats to teach them about American history, politics and business practices. We do the same with executives from foreign firms, and we help prepare U. S. executives for tours in other countries.

We are now developing a venture in botany with a group in Jamaica and building on our faculty expertise in Canada. Additional projects focus on Puerto Rico, Japan, Italy and the remainder of Europe.

Ramapo is special, but it is not unique in these respects. Many colleges have relations with institutions and governments in other countries, and export their experts and expertise. Each of these projects has competitors from other countries as well as from the U. S. I cite these examples not to tout Ramapo but to highlight a point. Why did we select these countries? What is our strategy?

In some cases these relationships are based on faculty interest and experience. In other cases, we provided additional training for faculty to help them develop the capacity to build new relationships. We decided on these areas by considering that we have limited resources and should pick the regions of the world with greatest relevance to our curriculum. Only after a year or two into these efforts did we begin to realize greater leverage by building on relationships already begun by the Sister State program of the N. J. Division of Trade, the high priority countries of USIA, and programs offered by groups such as the Port Authority.

By cooperating with these and other groups, we can develop still more services for export. For example, colleges could provide language and technical training for use by foreign customers of U. S.-made equipment and instrumentation. U. S. colleges and universities can work with U. S. and other firms overseas to set up graduate management programs, as is done in China. And U. S. colleges and universities can provide expertise to U. S. corporations in order for them to enhance their ability to meet environmental requirements and to advise local management on waste management, etc. The possibilities are endless.

Conclusion

Higher education has great potential as a service to export in addition to its role as part of the nation's infrastructure. We not only prepare people for an interdependent world, but also participate in it. But first, we must think of higher education as capable of this role, and build on existing strengths to develop cooperative networks and realize the potential.

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